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## CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE June 2016

If you would like more details about any of this correspondence, please contact Claire

Minutes of A.M. held 13.06.16

Details of an Enquirer's weekend in Coatbridge 2 – 4<sup>th</sup> September. Cost £200, financial help available

Reminder to fill in the G.M. questionnaire sent out last month

Minutes of G.M. held in Glasgow 11.06.16

Annual report from the Quaker Northfield Ecocentre in Birmingham

N.B. The next local business meeting will be on Sun 21<sup>st</sup> August

# Dumfries Quakers

## Newsletter for July and August 2016

### Meetings for Worship in July

Sunday 3rd	10.30 am	at Cumberland Street Day Centre, Dumfries
Sunday 10th	11.00 am	at 52 St Andrew Street, Castle Douglas, the home of Nancy Houston. We may continue our exploration of QF&P Ch. 21 begun in June.
Sunday 17th	10.30 am	at Cumberland Street Day Centre, Dumfries
Sunday 24th	9.45 am	Conversation, before Worship at 10.30 am
Sunday 31st		Fifth Sunday, so no Meeting for Worship in Dumfries. We are always welcome to join Castle Douglas at 10.30.

### Meetings for Worship in August

Sunday 7th	10.30 am	at Cumberland Street Day Centre, Dumfries
Sunday 14th	11.00 am	Venue and discussion topic to be decided
Sunday 21st	10.30 am	at Cumberland Street Day Centre, Dumfries <b>FOLLOWED BY LOCAL BUSINESS MEETING</b>
Sunday 28th	9.45 am	Conversation before Worship at 10.30 am

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### **Diary Dates**

Saturday 27th August from 11 am Area Meeting in Tarbert, Argyle

Saturday 24th September 2—6 pm New date for the annual Peace Festival at Allanton House.

### **CLERK'S CORRESPONDENCE** May 2016

If you would like more details about any of this correspondence, please contact Claire

Leaflet with book recommendations

Woodbrooke courses in May

JYM epistle

Leaflet on "Love & Loss"

'Stop Trident' workshops

QPSW Sustainability & New Economy grants

Peace Museum newsletter

Details of Enquirers weekend 2<sup>nd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> September in Coatbridge

Britain Yearly Meeting Epistle

BYM minutes

N.B. The next local business meeting will be on Sun 21<sup>st</sup> August

### **Some 'matters arising' from the business meeting on June 5th:**

The Council had double-booked leaders for the Time for Reflection on 28th June, so it didn't happen! Try again in September if anyone is interested.

The sending of greetings cards to other faith groups turned out to be a suggested response to the murder of the Glasgow shopkeeper, Asad Shah, who had sent Easter greetings to Christian friends on Facebook.

How does the Light push us into action? Quakers have a long tradition of testing concerns in local, area and yearly meetings. Testing a concern may challenge not just the leading of one Friend, but the commitment of the whole Meeting and lead to growth for everyone. Through the right use of this process we can support our Friends in their callings.

We have heard inspiring examples of Friends living out their faith. Friends had the opportunity to see a play about Ada Salter's outstanding social and political work a hundred years ago. Some Friends described their own personal journeys of acting under concern.

Our Swarthmore Lecturers shared their experiences of Quaker peace work in Central and East Africa. Although we heard the words of both we were deeply saddened that Cecile Nyiramana was prevented and Esther attended alone. They spoke of using and adapting existing peace-making tools. Some of the causes of conflict they see, such as poverty and equality, are present in our own society. Sustainable peacebuilding begins with individuals working within their local communities.

Our work with others and "movement building" will be the theme of our next Yearly Meeting. We have been challenged to consider whether we ought to be a prophetic voice crying in the wilderness, like John the Baptist, or take direct action in collaboration with others.

The problems we face are big and urgent and we may feel as if we are standing at the edge of all we know. However, if we have faith and trust in our leadings, when we take the next step together, either we will find earth under our feet or God will give us wings.

Signed in and on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting

DEBORAH ROWLANDS

Clerk

## EPISTLE FROM BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING

held at Friends House, London on 27— 30 May 2016

Loving Greetings to Friends everywhere.

British Friends of all ages, and visiting Friends from around the world, have gathered in London for our second of three Yearly Meetings looking at 'Living out our faith in the world' and have experienced a great depth of worship.

We reminded ourselves where we ended last year, with a call for equality and action. We were inspired by hearing an epistle from Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) and news of projects undertaken by individual Friends, local meetings and area meetings. We all, adults, children and young people, have considered how we use our gifts, how we recognise, test and support concerns, and how we work with others.

Taking so much time to consider the concept of Spirit-given gifts has brought us to a point of deeper understanding. What makes something a gift of the Spirit is not the gift itself but the way in which it is used.

As written in Corinthians: *'There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are varieties of activity, but in all of them and in everyone the same God is active. In each of us the Spirit is seen to be at work for some useful purpose.'*

*1 Corinthians 12:4-7 Revised English Bible*

Even our brokenness and burdens, which may change our lives in deep and challenging ways, can become gifts.

## Religious Society of Friends – Dumfries Meeting Minutes of Local Meeting 5<sup>th</sup> June 2016

The reading was from Quaker Faith & Practice 29.06 & was written by a former member of Dumfries meeting, Helen Steven, who has just died

Second Sunday Discussions

12<sup>th</sup> June - Discussion on Quaker Faith & Practice Chapter 21- Our Personal Journey at the Agnew's home

10<sup>th</sup> July – further discussion on Quaker Faith & Practice at Nancy's home

Collections – In July & August James McLeod will collect for "Friends of Palcraft" to help give a sustainable source of income for artisans & farmers in Palestine

On 28<sup>th</sup> June we hope to attend the Council meeting to give a 5 minute talk on Quakerism. The final version of the talk will be agreed next Sunday

We discussed a recent letter in The Friend suggesting Friends send cards to other faith groups in our area when they celebrate a special occasion. Jan Lethbridge will try to find the original letter & we will give this further thought.

Health & Safety – Claire reminded us where all the fire exits are situated & that a plan of the building is in the box & a small first aid kit is on our bookshelf.

A.M. is a telephone conference on 13<sup>th</sup> June. Jan Lethbridge hopes to take part & we thank her for agreeing to be our representative.

Our next L.M. will be on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August before A.M. in Tarbert, Argyle

Signed – Claire MacLeod (L.M. Clerk)

## CHARITY COLLECTION FOR JULY AND AUGUST 2016

### **PALCRAFTS**

Established in 2003, **Palcrafts** is a registered Scottish charity limited by guarantee.

Its primary purpose is the relief of poverty for Palestinian people by promoting their craft heritage and traditional skills, through education, and through its trading arm **Hadeel**.

**Hadeel** has Fair Trade status to purchase, import and sell traditional crafts from producer groups, mainly women's co-operatives and people with special needs, providing social benefits through employment.

The educational work aims to spread knowledge of the rich craft heritage of Palestine and the craft producers.

All profits are used to make grants for further development of the producer groups.

**Palcrafts** has a shop at 123 George Street, Edinburgh.

**James McLeod**

### **Quaker Voices**

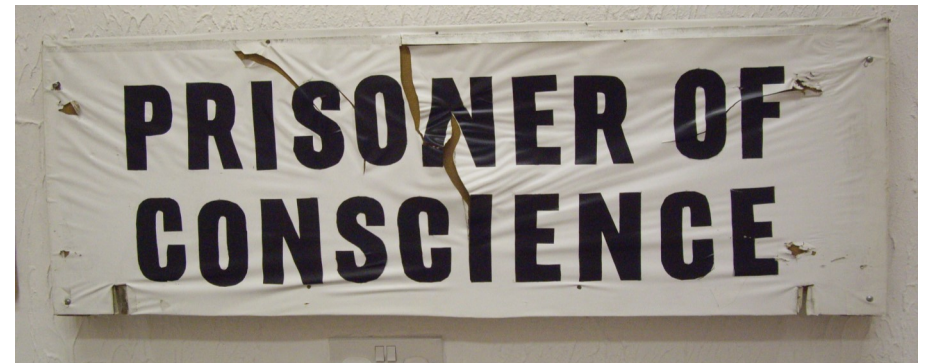
The May edition of the journal 'Quaker Voices' carries an article by Naomi Lethbridge, who grew up in Dumfries Meeting and is known to many of you.

This article follows on from the exhibition of her work at Friends House last autumn, part of a series of exhibitions by current practising artists with Quaker connections.

Her article is entitled 'The Context of Vastness: Drawing as Stillness, Quietude and Ritual.' The preamble states: "For an artist, a common question is 'why make art like this?' or 'why make art about that?'. These are questions artists constantly ask themselves as well. Leaving aside 'why make art at all?', the decision of the subject and method is one that is answered in a unique way by each artist.

(copy to be bought for library)

Many individuals' stories are told at the museum. Of particular interest to me was that of Arthur Windsor. He and his wife Ursula were members of Nailsworth Meeting in the early 1980s, when John and I first began attending Meeting there. They lived just outside the primary school which our children attended. Arthur refused to pay the proportion of his income tax which was directed to military purposes, and he was imprisoned for this, being quite elderly at the time. His story was told, and this banner displayed. It was originally attached to a car and driven around Gloucester on the day he went to prison.



I always find the artwork around peace particularly moving—a picture is indeed often worth a thousand words. So I was pleased to learn that later this year an exhibition is planned to showcase the ever-growing textile collection at the Peace Museum, including hand-made banners and quilts.

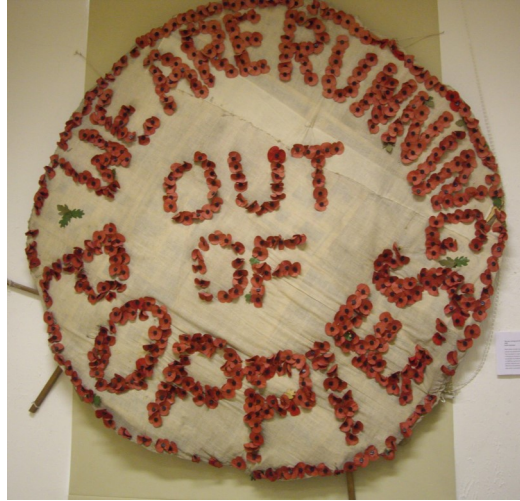
Another item of interest was a piece about the Unitarian Church, and its peace stance, which made me think it could be an ideal companion in the Glasgow Meeting house's search for new premises.

Jan Lethbridge



Peace Tree

## VISIT TO BRADFORD PEACE MUSEUM



Recently sojourning in Yorkshire, I took the opportunity to visit the Bradford Peace Museum, for which we had a collection some time ago. As luck would have it, we chose the second day of its extended opening hours, currently from 10 am on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

But I must admit that my first, and abiding, thought was ‘how will it ever survive?’ Being reasonably sound in wind and limb, we were not deterred by the stairs up to the second floor, nor the fact that one has to ring a doorbell and speak to someone to gain admittance. Indeed, it was very well worth the effort.

Being the only one of its kind in the UK, it boasts a collection of 7000 artefacts to tell the stories of peace, peacemakers, and the peace movement in the UK. Much of its work is in the educational field, offering four different workshops for schoolchildren: Museum Discovery; Peace Heritage Trail; Poppies, Remembrance and War Horses; and Children’s Rights and Peace. Curriculum resources for teachers to develop their own schemes of work at school are also available.

## *Universal Spirituality*

A speaker on a recent ‘Thought for the Day’ on the radio suggested (but not in these words) that the muddle that is human life is, actually, unrecognised spirituality. And it is the adherence to ‘religions’ that is, in large part, the origin of this blindness. He confessed that his background in the ‘disorganisation’ of Hinduism had perhaps granted him this insight.

It is an insight that we Quakers may feel we share, too: we do appear to share that ‘disorganisation’ (creedlessness). And we do feel that all elements of our lives are a sacrament – not that we would call that a creed, of course. It is just possible that I was in a state of alertness at the time of listening because the related matter of a drop in attendance at AM, GM, YM had been considered, briefly, at one of our LM discussions. (I think I had, actually, misunderstood the issue we had been asked to comment upon, but that does not affect the matter here!)

I say that the matters are “related” because it was mentioned at the said discussion that there is, today, much less of a difference between a Quaker outlook and *The World* than there used to be, implying, even, that much of the Quaker ‘work’ has been done. I am happy to take the blame for this heresy. The anxiety, therefore, felt by some Quakers over the drop in attendance is one borne of their reluctance to let go of the safe haven of Quakerism rather than a concern about the fruition of their ‘work’. And in that respect I must ask if our *Stalwarts* have yet to consider allowing Quakerism to subside into the *Universal Spirituality*. Those who are not attending have, perhaps, already done so.

John Lethbridge

## Lent Interactions

Early this spring Jenny, Jan and I attended most of five or six weekly meetings at Elshieshields, the home of Ann Shukman. Margaret Dobie and Janet Swain had convened these, with no particular theme in mind but with a seasoning of diverse Christian-based churches. (Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, Church of Scotland, Methodist and Quaker might be considered as diverse as could be expected.) We had each been supplied with a little book, by Rowan Williams, *What is Christianity?* (37 pp), which, it was thought, might be a stimulus to these Lent meetings.

I cannot recall much of any outcome being reached. (And nothing like that was really anticipated.) If any one of us had a concern or question then it was easy enough for comments and insights to flow; and that was stimulating. There was no sense of 'ecumenism' – that not being the purpose; and, perhaps, also, because the theological separations within this group were miniscule compared with the deeper human divisions which were often the subject of our world-wide considerations. But reactions and opinions were interesting, and, I found, often quite surprising. Weighty laity and retired clergy were, for one thing, still able to ask rather basic questions (a good thing) and have no settled positions about them (a surprise). I don't think 'Easter' was mentioned.

Another thing close exposure to these other communities did was to remind me just how far behind I had left these 'structured' churches and their theologies (being, like many in Quakerism, a refugee from them). A creed, for example, was not only a definition of membership, but, I felt, a limit to inquiry. Some were anxious about 'conversions' (or the lack of that effort by the churches) – the woes of the world and the salvation of souls being insoluble without it. Someone had found a short list of currently difficult issues for some of the churches – and some of these

would be the subject of a talk to be given by Professor Stuart Munro on 10<sup>th</sup> March. They were the persistent issues of reconciling science and religion, the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection and evolution. I said that I did not find them remotely troublesome.

And so I felt that many of our fellow participants had found themselves close to the ends of their lives (we were mostly 'older' people) without being closer to the spiritual contentment they might have expected. Still 'seeking' does not imbue me with any notion of failure or dissatisfaction.

Some of the participants could attend all of the time, and all of them could attend some of the time; but not all of them could attend all of the time. (Sorry, I could not resist that.) But there seemed to be a general agreement that it had been very worthwhile. Rowan Williams' book was barely mentioned. Its title suggested it would be a handy summary and the sort of guide that might be given to an inquirer. But it wasn't that. I had found it to be somewhat chaotic, a ramble, perhaps even incoherent. I felt that what he wanted to say (and nearly did) was that strict division and adherence in religions and sects were no longer effective in furthering human development: "...I've been trying to say something about the overall character of a religious commitment in our world, a character that is best expressed in terms of not only seeing but seeing that we're not seeing everything." (p 34)

I would be happy to join another Lent discussion group next year. And Elshieshields is a most conducive place for it.

John Lethbridge